

In the Claims

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-6 (canceled).

7. (currently amended) A column comprising a plurality of axially spaced trays with a distance of a tray space between the trays, in which each tray comprising comprises:

a bubble area; and

a truncated rectangular downcomer sharing at least two boundaries with the bubble area, wherein the rectangular downcomer has a length and a width, wherein the length is longer than the width, and an upper end and a lower end, and wherein the truncated rectangular downcomer comprising comprises:

two sloped downcomer walls along the length;

a downcomer opening at tray level; and,

a downward directed liquid discharge openings at the lower end; wherein the truncated rectangular downcomer is so positioned on the tray that bubble area is present along the length, wherein the cross-sectional area at the lower end of the truncated rectangular downcomer is less than 40% of the cross-sectional area of the upper end of the downcomer at tray level, and wherein the truncated rectangular downcomer extends to between about 50 and 90% of the tray spacing below a tray; and wherein the truncated rectangular downcomer is arranged in a staggered arrangement in which each tray is divided into two tray sections by a diametrical line with each tray section provided with a row of the truncated rectangular downcomer arranged perpendicular to the diametrical line such that the ends of the truncated rectangular downcomer of each tray section meet the diametrical line in an alternating fashion; and wherein each tray section includes a segmented downcomer.

Claims 8-10 (canceled).

11. (currently amended) The tray column of claim 7, in which the cross-sectional area at the lower end of the truncated rectangular downcomer is between about 5 and 40% of the cross-sectional area of the upper end of the truncated rectangular downcomer at tray level.

12. (currently amended) The tray column of claim 11, in which the cross-sectional area at the lower end of the truncated rectangular downcomer is between about 10 and 30% of the cross-sectional area of the upper end of the truncated rectangular downcomer at tray level.

13. (currently amended) The tray column of claim 12, in which the lower liquid discharge opening is formed by the elongated opening between the longitudinal lower ends of the truncated rectangular downcomer walls.

14. (currently amended) The tray column of claim 13, in which each of the truncated rectangular downcomers of the row of truncated rectangular downcomers is ~~are~~ positioned parallel relative towards each other, wherein each truncated rectangular downcomer extends from one point on the circumferential to the opposite point on the circumferential of the tray.

15. (canceled)

16. (currently amended) The column of claim 1514, in which an inlet weir is present along a boundary of an area just below the liquid discharge openings of a tray and the corresponding bubble area.

17. (previously presented) The column of claim 16 in which the column comprises a distillation column or an absorption column.